

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

We will begin promptly at 4pm



HOUSEKEEPING & LOGISTICS

- **The link to the recording will be posted on the [ASCEND 307 web page](#)**
 - This session will be recorded.
 - Handouts and the Slides are available on the ASCEND 307 webpage
- **Closed Captioning:** needs to be set up individually by clicking on the “closed caption” on the bottom row of icons on your session screen
- **Links posted in Chat:** throughout the session, pertinent links will be posted in the Chat
- **Q&A:** To ask questions, please use the Q & A box





ASCEND 307

Essential Readiness Skills Webinar Series

Focus on Systems Thinking and Teamwork

[Please watch a welcome video by Superintendent Degenfelder](#)

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

WHAT?

Skills employers consistently rank as essential for new hires.

- Applied Knowledge
 - Problem Solving
 - Making Decisions
- Effective Relationships
 - Team Member
 - Flexibility
- Workplace Skills
 - Manage Time
 - Communicate

WHY?

Superintendent Degenfelder 2025 Priority

- Pursuing Academic Excellence
 - Expand career & technical education opportunities

WY Community College Commission

- Social Capital Skills

Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education

- Employability skills

WHO needs them WHEN?

All students with and without disabilities need to function in society.

- Executive Functioning skills form the core foundation of employability skills
 - Pre-K-12
 - Develop executive function skills
 - Transition
 - Employability skills



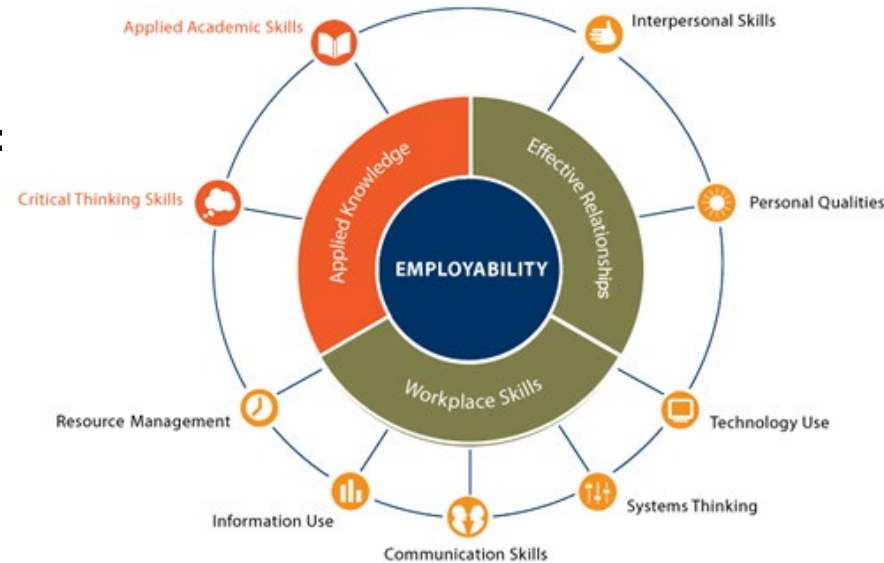
EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR WYOMING-READY WORKFORCE

Applied Knowledge:

- Applied academic skills: reading, writing, mathematics
- Critical thinking skills: problem solving, make decisions

Workplace Skills:

- Resource management: managing time & other resources
- Information use: using a variety of information to perform tasks
- Communication skills: communicating effectively with others to perform tasks
- Systems thinking: contributes to workplace teamwork
- Technology use: applying technology appropriately to perform tasks



Effective Relationships:

- Interpersonal skills: teamwork, positive contributions
- Personal qualities: personal responsibility, professionalism, flexibility



WORKPLACE SKILLS: SYSTEMS THINKING



Steven Prater is a Senior Technical Assistance Consultant at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where he supports schools, districts, and states in special education, MTSS, and data-based individualization. He currently contributes to professional development of IEP development and implementation for Wyoming districts.



Sheila Lovato is a Senior Technical Assistance Consultant at the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where she supports schools, districts, and states in using data and evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for students, particularly through MTSS and supports for students with disabilities. She currently contributes to WDE's Essential Skills micro-credential development.



WHAT IS SYSTEMS THINKING?



WHAT MAKES SOMETHING A SYSTEM?

**WHILE YOU WATCH, CONSIDER: WHAT
'SYSTEMS' DO STUDENTS HAVE TO NAVIGATE
EVERY DAY?**

Reflect In The Chat



WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

- Helps learners see how roles, responsibilities, and actions affect one another.
- Encourages attention to structure and function, not just individual effort
- Supports understanding that outcomes emerge from collective interactions, not isolated behaviors



WHY WOULD SYSTEMS THINKING BE NECESSARY FOR POST-SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT AND SUCCESS?

Reflect In The Chat



WHY ARE THESE SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS SOFT SKILLS?

- **Origin:** The term began in the 1960s (U.S. military) to distinguish people-focused skills from technical or “hard” skills.
- **Human-Centered:** Soft skills involve communication, collaboration, adaptability, and empathy—skills rooted in human interaction rather than technical tasks.
- **Harder to Measure:** They’re called “soft” because they are intangible and difficult to quantify, unlike hard skills that can be tested or certified.
- **Misleading Name:** Despite the label, soft skills are often the hardest to teach and the most critical for success in school, work, and life.

Systems thinking is the umbrella skill that makes other soft skills work together.



SYSTEMS THINKING IN THE WORKPLACE

- Understand how roles, people, and processes connect.
- Solve problems without creating new ones.
- Adjust strategies based on feedback and outcomes.
- Monitor personal impact on team progress.
- Collaborate effectively across differences and roles.



- Problem-solving
- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Strategic thinking
- Big-picture thinking
- Continuous improvement



WHY THIS MATTERS

- Work is complex and interconnected.
- Employees must self-monitor and adapt.
- Teams rely on communication and coordination.
- Problems require collaborative solutions.
- Success depends on managing tasks and relationships.



SYSTEMS THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM

- Start with real-world systems students already experience.
- Use questions that focus on cause, impact, and change over time.
- Make relationships, patterns and connections visible.
- Build reflection and self-monitoring.
- Use group work to practice roles, feedback and collaboration.



THE SKILL THAT MAKES SYSTEMS THINKING WORK

Executive Functioning

- Helps manage tasks, time, and priorities within systems.
- Supports self-monitoring and strategic adjustment.
- Enables flexible thinking when conditions change.
- Regulates emotions and behavior in group settings.
- Sustains goal-directed action in teamwork and problem-solving.



**TO WHAT EXTENT ARE YOU INTENTIONALLY
DEVELOPING STUDENTS' SYSTEMS THINKING
SKILLS, NECESSARY FOR SCHOOL AND POST-
SCHOOL SUCCESS?**

**WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT
SYSTEMS THINKING?**

Reflect In The Chat



**HOW EDUCATORS CAN
PREPARE STUDENTS TO
WORK AS PART
OF A SYSTEM OR TEAM?**



THREE PILLARS OF TEAMWORK

Awareness

- Of yourself and others.

Communication

- Verbal and written.
- Listening to others.

Accountability

- To your tasks and the team as a whole.



SELF-AWARENESS

- Help students understand their own skills and strengths and how they can be used when collaborating with a team.
- Students may not recognize how their individual strengths may be utilized.

1. Possible Leadership Skills	2. Skills I possess	3. Ways I use the skill
• Communication		
• Empathy		
• Decision-making		
• Responsibility		
• Teamwork		
• Problem-solving		
• Adaptability		
• Integrity		
• Creativity		
• Conflict resolution		
• Motivation		
• Time management		
• Critical thinking		
• Listening		
• Persuasion		
• Accountability		
• Confidence		
• Negotiation		



AWARENESS OF OTHERS

- **Perspective Taking**

- Being aware of other's perspectives is important for successful collaboration.
- Help students understand that they don't necessarily have to agree with other's perspectives, but it is key to seek understanding and adjust the way you interact accordingly.

“Perspective taking may improve business outcomes not only by giving us access to more information than we would have without it, but also by ramping up activity in core brain regions involved in creative problem-solving and innovation.”



PERSPECTIVE TAKING REFLECTION ACTIVITY

- Spend 30 seconds recalling a specific situation during the last two weeks when you attempted to take another person's perspective on a topic. This could range from a business negotiation to a conversation with someone in your family.
- Spend three minutes describing the situation in detail from beginning to end using written bullet points.
- Spend one minute imagining the situation from the other person's perspective. Specifically, imagine how you think they would describe the interaction.
- Reflect for 30 seconds on what you did that was useful to understand the other person's perspective.



WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU USED TO HELP STUDENTS BUILD AWARENESS OF THEMSELVES AND OTHERS?

Reflect In The Chat



COMMUNICATION

Collaboration requires communication. Effective collaborators should be able to:

- Explain their own ideas,
- Express their feelings in an open but non-threatening way,
- Listen carefully to others,
- Ask questions to clarify others' ideas and emotions,
- Sense how others feel based on their nonverbal communication (e.g., facial expressions, tone of voice, diminished participation),
- Initiate conversations about the group climate or process if they sense tensions brewing, and
- Reflect on their group's activities and interactions and encourage other group members to do so.



STRATEGIES TO BUILD COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND DEVELOP A HEALTHY GROUP CLIMATE

- Randomize group membership to increase the chances of students encountering peers with diverse backgrounds and interests.
- Design icebreaker activities that promote awareness and appreciation of inherent differences within a group.
- Walk students through effective strategies for identifying and overcoming group conflict.
- Encourage students to participate actively and pose questions to their peers.
- Devote class time to help students reflect on their group dynamic and overall functioning. You can provide them with prompt questions to consider and/or facilitate a conversation driven by student insights, questions, and concerns.



DOCUMENTING TASKS

- Documenting tasks helps:
 - Existing members keep track of tasks and deadlines.
 - New members understand what is being done.
 - Ensures everyone remains on the same page.
- In the classroom, have students document tasks as part of a group assignment. Have them include information such as:
 - The person assigned to each task.
 - Completion date.
 - Necessary resources.



WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU USED TO HELP BUILD COMMUNICATION SKILLS WITH STUDENTS?

Reflect In The Chat



BEING ACCOUNTABLE

- Staying accountable involves making clear commitments and tracking progress.
- Help students understand how their tasks affect the progress of others and the team as a whole.
- This is an example of how students can track progress on tasks and reflect on how they can improve.

Task	Start Date	Due Date	Daily Progress Notes	Completed?
Task 1: _____ _____	_____ ____	_____ ____	_____ _____	Yes / No
Task 2: _____ _____	_____ ____	_____ ____	_____ _____	Yes / No
Task 3: _____ _____	_____ ____	_____ ____	_____ _____	Yes / No

End-of-Week Reflection

Take a moment to reflect on your progress with the tasks above. What strategies helped you stay on track? Did you encounter any challenges, and how did you address them? What will you do differently next week to improve your follow-through?



**WHAT STRATEGIES HAVE YOU
USED TO HELP STUDENTS BUILD
ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THEMSELVES AND
THEIR ROLE ON A TEAM?**

Reflect In The Chat



**PICK A STRATEGY YOU LEARNED TODAY.
DECIDE WHERE IT FITS INTO AN
UPCOMING LESSON AND PLAN
HOW YOU WILL USE IT.**

Reflect In The Chat



WHAT TO REMEMBER

Key Takeaways

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Questions?



PLEASE COMPLETE THE EVALUATION

Your feedback is valuable to us. Please take a moment to complete the [evaluation](#):



ASCEND 307 WEBINAR SERIES - WHAT'S NEXT

Employability Skills Webinar Series are (generally):

Second Wednesday of the month, 4-5pm

- May 6 (NOTE: first week in May): Wrap up, review/circle back as applicable

Please see the [ASCEND 307 website](#) to register.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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ASCEND 307 is a multi-year initiative developed through a federal grant awarded to the Wyoming Department of Education. The overarching goal of the Wyoming State Personnel Development Grant is to improve outcomes for students with disabilities by enhancing personnel preparation and professional development in education and transition services.



LEARN MORE

- Social Capital Skills: communitycolleges.wy.edu/adult-education-standards-success
- Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education: <https://cte.ed.gov/>
- Employability Skills Framework; Employability skills Planning Checklist both pdf and docx <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/employability-skills-framework>
- Integrating Employability Skills: A Framework for All Educators: <https://air.org/resource/guidetoolkit/integrating-employability-skills-framework-all-educators>
- ASCEND 307 web page: <https://edu.wyoming.gov/parents/special-education/ascend-307/>
- Employability skills framework instruction planning tool <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/employability-skills-framework-instruction-planning-tool.pdf>
- Understanding the IDEA and FAPE in relation to functional skills https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/policy/documents/IDEA_FAPE_FunctionalSkillsGuide.pdf
- Employability skills handout air.org/resource/guidetoolkit/integrating-employability-skills-framework-all-educators



LEARN MORE

- Belonging handout; Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies; Teaching Social Behaviors; Instructional Technology
Promotingprogress.org/home
- Self-Management tip sheet <https://intensiveintervention.org/>
- PK-5k SEL Competencies with Assessment; 1-3 SEL Competencies with Assessment; 4-5 SEL Competencies with Assessment; 6-8 SEL Competencies with Assessment; 9-10 SEL Competencies with Assessment; 11-Adult SEL Competencies with Assessment
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/social-emotional-learning/competencies>
- Integrated Supports Star - overview; Integrated Supports Star - tip sheet; Respite Supports Star; Safety and Security Supports Star; Support and Decision Making Supports Star; Advocacy and Engagement Supports Star; Social and Spirituality Supports Star; Healthy Living Supports Star; Community Living Supports Star; Daily Life and Employment Supports Star
<https://www.lifecoursetools.com/lifecourse-library/integrated-supports-star/>
- Employability Skills Workbook <https://www.air.org/resource/guidetoolkit/integrating-employability-skills-framework-all-educators>
- Employability Skills Framework Assessment Selection Tool <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/employability-skills-framework-assessment-selection.pdf>
- Employability Skills Framework Interviewing for Employability Skills <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/employability-skills-framework-interview-guide.pdf>
- Matrix of comparisons of employability skills assessments <https://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/employability-skills-framework-source-matrix.pdf>
- Social and Emotional Competencies and Career and Technical Education Employability Standards Crosswalk
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/FINAL_SEL_CTE_Crosswalk_1.pdf
- Wisconsin's Employability Skills Certificate Implementation Guide
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/pdf/esimpleguide.pdf>

